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On an Old Babylonian Letter addressed "to Lushtamar."—

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IN the JDP collection of the University of Pennsylvania there is an Old Babylonian letter addressed "to Lushtamar," which has in recent years attained an unpleasant notoriety. In the official history of the expedition written by Hilprecht (*Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania*, Series D, Vol. I, p. 532), he says: "Concerning the character of the business and administrative department of the 'library,' where contracts were executed, orders given out, income and expense lists kept, etc., I have to add little to what has been previously stated (p. 524). A number of letters were found intact. The envelopes sealed and addressed more than four thousand years ago, immediately before the city was conquered and looted, were still unbroken. While writing these lines one of those ancient epistles of the time of Amraphel (Gen. 14) lies unopened before me. It is $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches long, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, and $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches thick. One and the same seal cylinder has been rolled eleven times over the six sides of the clay envelope before it was baked with the document within. It bears the simple address 'To Lushtamar.' Though sometimes curious to know the contents of the letter, I do not care to break the fine envelope and to intrude upon Mr. Lushtamar's personal affairs and secrets, as long as thousands of mutilated literary tablets from the library require all my attention."

Here, if language means anything, Hilprecht says that this tablet was "found" by the expedition of 1900 in "the library."¹

¹ See also *Transactions* of the Department of Archæology of the University of Pennsylvania, p. 114; also Hilprecht's *Die Ausgrabungen der Universität von Pennsylvania am Bel-Tempel zu Nippur*, Leipzig, 1903, p. 61 ff.; and *Recent Research in Bible Lands*, p. 532. For the implications of these statements and the shifting and contradictory statements which Hilprecht has made as one after another of his assertions about the tablet have been proved untenable, see *The So-called*

Dr. Peters called attention of this Society three years ago to the fact that the tablet was not excavated at Nippur, but was purchased at Bagdad (see JAOS. xxvi, 158), and it is the purpose of the present article to call attention to evidence which, the writer believes, clearly proves that the tablet was not written at Nippur and was never sent to Nippur. The evidence is as follows:

In the German lecture of Hilprecht already quoted (*Die Ausgrabungen*, etc.) a half-tone reproduction of the face of this tablet is given, on p. 62, and also in the *Transactions*, p. 156. The characters on the seal are not very clear in either reproduction, but a part of the seal can, though with difficulty, be read. I have examined these pictures repeatedly in different lights and with a glass, and make out the name of the sender to be *Ilu-šub-ba-ni apil I-bi-^{ilu}NIN-ŠAH*, i. e., Ilushubani son of Ibininshakh.¹ Now the sender of this letter, Ilushubani, son of Ibininshakh, was a resident of Sippar and not of Nippur. In a tablet of the Kh² collection published by Ranke (BE. vi, No. 50, l. 19) Ilushubani son of Ibininshakh appears as a witness. It can be shown that this tablet was written in Sippar. The reasons are: 1. That in the oath-formula the contracting parties mentioned the god Shamash before the god Marduk. This creates a probability that the residence of the parties was Sip-

Peters-Hilprecht Controversy, pp. 37 ff., 55, 186-190, 235, and 310-314. In examining the references in this last work, it should be noted that none of the material contained in brackets was part of the original statements.

¹ I have not been able to obtain access to the tablet itself, but this reading has been confirmed since my paper was presented at the meeting in Cambridge, by Dr. Hugo Radau, who now has the tablet in his possession. In a pamphlet privately printed in Philadelphia, May, 1908, in which Dr. McClellan, a professor of medicine, gives a "Non-Partisan View of Professor Hilprecht's Work," and Dr. Radau treats of "Hilprecht's View Regarding Nippur Tablets," Radau endeavors to forestall the effect upon Hilprecht of the publication of my present article, and in doing so confirms the correctness of my reading, also supplying from the tablet the occupation of the sender and an additional phrase which were so blurred in the photographs that I could not make them out. According to him the seal reads: "Ilushubani, the merchant, son of Ibininshakh, the servant of Ninshah." *Dam-gar* "merchant," and *nitakh* ^{ilu}NIN-ŠAH, "servant of Ninshakh," are the words which the photographs did not reveal.

par, the city of Shamash. 2. This probability is raised to a certainty by the fact that the names of two other witnesses to this contract (BE. vi, 50), viz: Rish-shamash, son of Imgur-ukhki, and Abumwaqar, son of Shamashnurmatim (ll. 21, 22), occur as witnesses also on another tablet published by Ranke (BE. vi, 57, ll. 20 and 22)—a tablet which was written in Sippar. This is shown by the fact that in the oath which confirms the contract they swore not only by the gods Shamash and Marduk, but by the city Sippar. Ilushubani was certainly, therefore, a resident of Sippar. Both these contracts were dated in the reign of Shamsuiluna, the son and successor of Hammurabi, the dynasty to which Hilprecht refers this letter, and I may add that he is the only Ilushubani son of Ibi-Ninshakh whose name is known to us. It is clear, therefore, that the letter was written at Sippar and not at Nippur. A catastrophe at Nippur could accordingly not have prevented the despatch of the letter, and so account for the presence of the letter in its envelope.

Why, then, was this letter never opened in ancient times? The answer seems to me very clear. It is well known that all important documents were written in duplicate. Two copies of this letter were undoubtedly made. One was sent to Lushtamar, the other retained by the writer Ilushubani. When Lushtamar received his copy, he broke the clay envelope and read the letter. The envelope of this one has, we are told, never been broken. This is accordingly Ilushubani's duplicate copy which he retained for his letter file. If he lived at Sippar, this was never sent from Sippar, so that it could not be claimed that this particular tablet was sent from Sippar to Nippur. It is quite impossible to claim, therefore, with any basis of reason that this tablet has ever been at Nippur.¹

¹ Radau, who in these matters always reflects Hilprecht, now admits (pamphlet cited above, p. 29 ff.), that this tablet was written at Sippar, but claims that one must prove that Lushtamar lived at Sippar before my conclusion is established. He did not, however, tell the audience of non-Assyriologists, to whom his paper was read, that this letter had never been opened. I submit that it is far more probable that this is the copy made for Ilushubani's letter file in Sippar, than that it was sent to a Lushtamar at Nippur, that the latter city was destroyed before Lushtamar could open it, that an Assyriologist bought it of an

Arab thief, gave it to that thief for safe keeping until he (the thief) could deliver it in a distant city, that the Assyriologist bought the same tablet again of a Baghdad dealer without knowing it, labeled it in a museum as from the latter purchase, and then in the end knew that it was the same tablet which many years before he had bought of the thief. The series of improbabilities ancient and modern are too great a strain on one's credulity, especially as the statements of the Assyriologist as originally made are now admitted by him to have been wrong in practically all their detail, and as the only other tablet, purchased at the same time as the Lushtamar tablet, which has so far been published, is a contract written at Sippar. (Cf. Ranke, BE. vi, No. 17, and the *So-called Peters-Hilprecht Controversy*, p. 81.)